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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 001290

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ATT'S TRIP TO U.S. TO WITNESS
SIGNING OF MCC COMPACT

REF: A. BAMAKO 01031
 [B.](#) BAMAKO 01112
 [C.](#) BAMAKO 01154

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Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: President Amadou Toumani Toure's (ATT) upcoming visit to the U.S. to witness the signing of Mali's compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) provides an opportunity to highlight our strong relationship with this moderate, stable Muslim democracy, that stands as an example for West Africa and beyond. ATT's visit also offers an important opportunity to discuss the continued presence of an al-Qaida affiliate, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), in Mali, recent fighting between the GSPC and the Tuareg rebel group known as the Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC), and what role the U.S. could play in improving northern Mali's security situation. End Summary.

Democracy and International Engagement

2.(SBU) Mali faces many challenges, including its status as one of the poorest nations in the world, poor literacy and health indicators, food security concerns and the presence of terrorist elements in the country's sparsely populated northern regions. The U.S. has a significant stake in ensuring that Mali is able to adequately address these challenges.

3.(C) Mali has a strong human rights record, and is one of the few members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) rated as free by Freedom House. Mali is also a responsible and engaged international partner. It is active in the United Nations and other international organizations, has participated in several international peacekeeping operations, and is the current Chair of the Community of Democracies. After a Hugo Chavez visit in July 2007 (in which he offered Mali 100 million dollars in oil), Mali made public statements supporting Venezuela's Security Council candidacy. Following Chavez's remarks to the United Nations in September, however, Mali changed its position and supported Guatemala. The Foreign Minister explicitly tied the change to the realization that Mali's vote must ensure the continued possibility of a viable security council (he also strenuously denied reports that Mali's permanent representative had voted for Venezuela in the 12th round of voting as categorically impossible).

4.(SBU) Mali's status as a moderate Muslim democracy with 15

years of democratic progress means the U.S. has a considerable stake in ensuring the success of the April 2007 presidential and June 2007 legislative elections. These follow three successful presidential elections since 1992, including the 2002 poll that brought ATT to office. Amidst a gaggle of 104 political registered political parties in Mali, only 17 are represented in Parliament, and only a handful of these are truly national in character. ATT enjoys the support of most of the main political parties, while eschewing specific party membership, claiming the mantle of a political independent, or "consensus" leader. Until recently, the absence of a declared opposition party enabled Muslims to describe their political system as one of consensus. Although no one, including ATT, has officially announced their candidacy for 2007, the two main candidates are ATT and National Assembly President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita (IBK), one of ATT's main challengers for the Presidency in 2002. Although ATT remains the odds-on favorite, instability in northern Mali, the increasingly combative nature of the 2007 presidential campaign, and the fact that IBK may view 2007 as his last political chance means this could be one of the most hard-fought elections since Mali's democratic transition. It is vital to U.S. interests in Mali and West Africa that the 2007 presidential election strengthens rather than weakens Malian democracy. President Toure may request USG resources to support the electoral process during his visit; the Embassy will propose possible assistance programs septel.

Tuaregs, Salafists and Security in Northern Mali

5.(C) Mali's sparsely populated northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal) have long served as a haven for terrorist groups and smugglers. Mali's small security apparatus is unable to control the country's long and porous borders. An

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attack by Tuareg rebels on Malian military bases in the town of Kidal (and the desertion of the military commander of the base at Menaka) on May 23, 2006, further complicated northern Mali's political and security situation. Mali has weathered two earlier Tuareg rebellions (one from 1962-1964 and a second from 1990-1996), and for many Malians, the May 23 events constituted a serious setback for the national reintegration process begun at the end of the second rebellion in 1996. The U.S. has maintained that the ADC-GOM conflict is an internal one between Malian Muslims that must be resolved by Malians.

6.(C) On July 4 the GOM and Tuareg rebels (now known as the Alliance for Democracy and Change, or ADC) signed the Algiers Accords. The Accords, while skirting the ADC's demand of political "autonomy" for Mali's northern region of Kidal, incorporated the ADC into the restructuring of key local government institutions in exchange for the return of weapons stolen during the May 23 attacks. Unfortunately, the GOM and ADC have been unable to implement controversial elements of the Accords, such as the repositioning of Malian military units in Kidal, the disarmament of the ADC, and the "reintegration" of Tuareg combatants back into the Malian military via the creation of special "all-nomad" military units. Two battles between Algeria-backed ADC fighters and the GSPC (most recently on October 23) have dimmed the likelihood of ADC disarmament and sparked concern that the Accords may have been overtaken by events. ATT and the GOM have not yet articulated a policy on the continued implementation of the Accords or the ADC-GSPC conflict in the north, complicating our ability to assess the best way our already-active military engagement with Mali might support positive outcomes.

MCC: Joining a Robust Bilateral Relationship

7.(SBU) The signing of a Millennium Challenge Account compact with Mali will make the U.S. the largest bilateral donor in Mali, cement strong U.S. - Mali relations, and better position Mali as a force for stability in a politically fragile region. Other significant USG contributions to Mali's socio-economic development and security (figures from (FY 2006) via the Department of State, USAID, DOD, Peace Corps, NIH and CDC include:

--USD 16.7 million in Child Survival and Health funds

--USD 15.3 million in Development Assistance funds

--USD 1.5 million from the President's Africa Education Initiative per year for teacher training

--USD 600,000 for the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program

--Cutting edge health research in areas including Malaria and HIV/AIDS, creating a center of excellence drawing scientists from across Africa and the U.S. university sphere

Additional key programs include the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) events and DOD-administered humanitarian assistance funds to build schools, health clinics and wells throughout northern Mali. Mali is also a crucial partner in the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership.

The North Raises Questions

8.(C) Given the fast-evolving nature of developments in the north, key questions for ATT during his U.S. visit include:

-- How can the USG further assist the GOM to improve peace and security in northern Mali? Is the GOM intent on implementing the Algiers Accords and moving forward with rebel disarmament, Malian military repositioning and the re-integration of Tuareg fighters under the command of the Malian armed forces?

-- What is the GOM's position on the ADC-GSPC conflict? What is the GOM's plan for preventing the GSPC from using Malian territory as a safe-haven?

-- What role does the GOM envision for the U.S. regarding the implementation of the Accords and the continued training of Malian military units?

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